from the drying yard or premises. Pads should be spread out in thin layer for uniform drying with frequent stirring which is essential for preventing mold growth and discolouration. The material should be heaped and covered by clean gunny bags/tarpaulin at night. When the moisture level in dried chilli pods is below 15%, they should be packed in clean dry gunny bags and stored ensuring protection from dampness. Dunnage has to be provided to stack the packed bags to prevent moisture ingress. Care should be taken to stack the bags 50-60 centimetres away from the wall.

(d) Government has not fixed spice-wise targets for exports. Spices Board has fixed a target of export of 40,000 MT chillies valued at Rs. 160 crores for the year 1996-97.

**Trend of Declining Exports**

1685. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether various export councils had been consulted on the formulation of policy for enhancing exports in 1996-97;

(b) whether it is a fact that the export policy for 1996-97 has run out of steam;

(c) the reasons for the lacklustre performance of exports in 1996-97; and

(d) the steps proposed to rectify the weaknesses of export policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (d) No Sir, the Export Import Policy 1992-97, has provided a conducive atmosphere for export growth which is borne out by the fact that exports have grown in $ terms by 20%, 18% and 21% respectively over die past three years. The main reasons for deceleration of exports during April-Sept., 1996 are deceleration in the rate of global export growth, sharp reduction in the permitted ceiling for rice and wheat exports in view of tighter suppjy conditions in domestic market, fall in the unit price of rough as well as polished diamonds, high cost of export packing credit, and infrastructural inadequacies. Review of the export policy is a continuous process and steps have been initiated to achieve further simplification of the policy and procedure by way of discussions with the trade and industry for formulating the exim policy effective from 1.4.97.

**Lock-out in Mafatlai Engineering Industries Ltd., Kalwe, Maharashtra**

1686. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of the Plant of M/s Mafatlai Engineering Industries Limited at Kalwe, Thane, Maharashtra which is under lock-out since May, 1989;

(b) whether the Government have taken any action to reopen or revive the said unit;

(c) whether any proposal has been put forward by the employees of the said unit to run it as a co-operative organisation;

(d) the impediments being faced in re-opening the said unit as on date;

(e) whether the management of the said unit moved any petition before any authority to declare it as a sick unit; and

(f) if so, the response from the said authority?

I THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (f) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Voluntary Retirement Scheme in the Coffee Board**

1687. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE.be pleased to state: